

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
USMISSION SINAI
CINCEUR

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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL, CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT:DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - AUGUST 11, 1976

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING FOR AUGUST 11,
1976:

Q. FRED, WHAT IS THE UNITED STATES DOING ABOUT THE SITU-
ATION OF THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN TAL ZAATAR?

A. WHAT ARE WE DOING IN THE SENSE OF HUMANITARIAN ASSIS-
TANCE, BERNIE?

Q. IN THE SENSE OF HAVE WE SAID ANYTHING PUBLICLY YET
ABOUT OUR CONCERN ABOUT THE SIEGING OF THE PALESTINIAN
CIVILIANS THERE?

A. I THINK IT SHOULD BE CLEAR THAT INDIVIDUAL SITUATIONS
SUCH AS TAL ZAATAR CAN ONLY BE RESOLVED THROUGH AN END TO
THE FIGHTING IN LEBANON. AND WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY SUPPORT-
ED -- URGED THE PARTIES TO END THE CONFLICT. WE HAVE RE-
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PEATEDLY MADE PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT OUR AIMS IN LEBANON,
MOST RECENTLY THIS MORNING BY THE SECRETARY IN THE HAGUE,
WHERE IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE HE STATED OUR SUPPORT FOR A

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE PARTIES TO BEGIN THAT
PROCESS.

Q. TO BEGIN THAT PROCESS?

A. TO BEGIN THAT PROCESS; THAT IS, OF FINDING A SOLUTION.

--NOW, ON THE HUMANITARIAN FRONT, WE HAVE UNDERTAKEN
HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS TO RELIEVE THE SUFFERING OF VICTIMS

OF THE CONFLICT. I WILL JUST MENTION A FEW OF THOSE. I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE THE POINT INITIALLY THAT THE BEAKDOWN OF NORMAL GOVERNMENTAL AND INTERNATIONAL CHANNELS FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN LEBANON HAS IMPOSED GREAT DIFFICULTIES ON US. BUT, NEVERTHELESS, TO DATE THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS CHANNELED \$2 MILLION THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS FOR LEBANON AND AN ADDITIONAL \$1.6 MILLION IN MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL. THAT'S IN BEIRUT.

--NOW, A FURTHER \$1 MILLION WORTH OF SUPPLIES IS IN THE PIPELINE TO AUH.

Q. WHAT'S THAT?

A. THAT IS IN MEDICAL SUPPLIES. AND AN ADDITIONAL \$1.5 MILLION IN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE HOSPITAL TO HELP IT ABSORB THE FINANCIAL LOSSES CAUSED BY THE CONFLICT. WE ARE CONTINUING TO CONSIDER FURTHER AID FOR BOTH AUH AND THE ICRC.

--NOW, FINALLY, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS PROPOSED TO THE CONGRESS AN AMENDMENT TO THE FY 1977 FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT. THIS WOULD PROVIDE 420 MILLION IN RELIEF AND REHABILITATION FOR LEBANON.

Q. WHAT'S THAT, RELIEF?

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A. RELIEF AND REHABILITATION IS THE DESCRIPTION OF IT.

--NOW, ALL THIS, OF COURSE, WAS SPELLED OUT, MOST OF IT IN ANY EVENT, WAS SPELLED OUT IN UNDER SECRETARY HABIB'S TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON REFUGEES AND ESCAPEES ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO.

Q. I COME BACK TO MY QUESTION AGAIN. I SEE YOUR ITEMIZED LIST OF AMERICAN FINANCIAL SUPPORT, BUT I AM ASKING SPECIFICALLY, HAS THE UNITED STATES SAID ANYTHING PUBLICLY ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN

THE BESIEGED CAMP AT TAL ZAATAR, OR HAS THE U.S. BEEN SILENT ON THAT?

A. IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF BEING SILENT. I THINK WE HAVE MADE NUMEROUS PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT OUR DESIRE FOR A CEASEFIRE BY ALL PARTIES IN LEBANON.

Q. SO YOU HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING ON TAL ZAATAR SPECIFICALLY?

A. I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY SPECIFIC STATEMENT DIRECTED AT TAL ZAATAR BUT CERTAINLY OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS WITH REGARD TO WHAT IS GOING ON IN LEBANON AND THE TERRIBLE CONFLICT THERE ARE A MATTER OF RECORD ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS, STARTING WITH THE PRESIDENT, THE SECRETARY AND TESTIMONY ON THE HILL. I THINK IT'S QUITE CLEAR HOW WE VIEW THE PLIGHT OF THE PEOPLE IN LEBANON.

Q. I WANTED TO ASKED IF YOU COULD TELL US WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME THERE WAS ANY OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH THE MARONITE LEADERSHIP IN LEBANON. I BELIEVE IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION A WEEK OR SO AGO YOU SAID THAT THERE HAD NOT BEEN ANY CERTAINLY SINCE AMBASSADOR SEELYE LEFT, AND INDEED BEFORE THEN.

A. I DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION. I DO NOT KNOW WHEN THE LAST CONTACT WAS.

Q. COULD YOU FIND OUT?
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A. I WILL CERTAINLY TRY TO FIND OUT.

Q. I WOULD LIKE TO COME BACK TO THIS, FRED.

A. YES.

Q. DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT SEE THAT SIEGE SITUATION AT TAL ZAATAR SEPARATELY FROM THE OVERALL PREDICAMENT OF THE WAR IN LEBANON BETWEEN THE OPPOSING SIDES? OR DO YOU PREFER TO SEE THIS PARTICULAR SITUATION, WHERE CIVILIANS ARE TRAPPED BECAUSE OF THE WAR AND THEY CAN'T GET WOUNDED OUT, AS SIMPLY PART OF THE WAR THAT DOES NOT CALL FOR ANY SPECIAL APPEAL ON THE PART OF THE UNITED STATES?

A. ON THE QUESTION OF SEEING IT AS A SPECIAL PART, I THINK WE HAVE STATED A NUMBER OF TIMES THAT WE CONSIDER THE WHOLE CONFLICT, THE HIDEOUS CIVIL WAR, AS DEPLORABLE IN EVERY ASPECT. AND I CERTAINLY THINK THAT WOULD IN-

CLUDE TAL ZAATAR. IT IS A QUESTION OF THE PEOPLE IN LEBANON BEING TORN APART IN VARIOUS UNPLEASANT WAYS, AND I CERTAINLY WOULD NOT SAY THAT WE HAVE CONDEMNED OR DEPLORED EACH ONE OF THESE WAYS AT DIFFERENT TIMES. I THINK WE HAVE MADE OUR POSITION VERY CLEAR WITH REGARD TO THE WHOLE HUMANITARIAN ASPECT OF THE LEBANON CONFLICT, BERNIE.

--WE HAVE NOT SINGLED OUT ANY PARTICULAR ASPECT OF IT. IT IS MOST UNFORTUNATE IN MANY MANY ASPECTS.

Q. IS THE SITUATION IN THIS PARTICULAR ESTABLISHMENT ANY

DIFFERENT FROM THE SHELLING OF OTHER CIVILIAN AREAS IN BEIRUT OR IN LEBANON? WHAT MAKES THIS SO SPECIAL?

A. I THINK I HAVE JUST SAID THAT --

Q. I'M TRYING TO GET YOUR ANSWER.

A. NO, I JUST REPLIED TO THAT. I SAID WE HAVE NOT SINGLED OUT EVERY ASPECT OF THE LEBANESE CONFLICT WHICH UNCLASSIFIED

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WE DEPLORE. WE HAVE SAID ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS AND IN VARIOUS WAYS, THE MOST RECENT BEING ONE MINUTE AGO, THAT WE CONSIDERED THE ENTIRE CIVIL WAR TO BE UNFORTUNATE AND DEPLORABLE IN MANY DIFFERENT ASPECTS. SO I AM SAYING -- I AM NOT SINGLING OUT ANY PARTICULAR ASPECT OF IT.

Q. IS IT TRUE THAT THIS PARTICULAR CAMP HAS ARMED FORCES IN IT, THAT CIVILIANS ARE BEING USED AS SHIELDS TO SOME EXTENT TO KEEP THIS ESTABLISHMENT WITHIN -- AS A SALIENT WITHIN THE, SAY, THE MARONITE --

A. I AM SIMPLY NOT GOING TO GET INTO A DESCRIPTION OR CHARACTERIZATION OF THE KIND OF FIGHTING THAT IS GOING ON IN THAT AREA.

Q. YOU REPORTED THE SECRETARY AS SAYING THAT HE FAVORED A ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE PARTIES TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF SETTLEMENT. WHEN HE SPEAKS OF THE "PARTIES" , DOES HE INCLUDE THE PLO ON THAT, OR ANY PART OF IT?

A. JOE, I WOULD SIMPLY HAVE TO GET A CLEAR READ-OUT OF PRECISELY WHAT THE SECRETARY SAID. THAT IS ONE SUBJECT THAT WAS NOT GIVEN ME IN MY NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY'S NEWS CONFERENCE THIS MORNING. AND I THINK WE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT FOR CLARIFICATION ON WHAT THE SECRETARY MEANT ON A NUMBER OF ASPECTS WITH REGARD TO LEBANON.

Q. YOU SPOKE ABOUT A PROPOSAL TO CONGRESS FOR \$20 MILLION FOR RELIEF AND REHABILITATION. I PRESUME THIS WILL BE DONE WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON. BUT THERE IS NO GOVERNMENT THERE NOW, IS THERE?

A. I DO NOT THINK THE MODALITIES HAVE BEEN WORKED OUT. IT IS STILL A PROPOSAL BEFORE THE CONGRESS. IT IS AN AMENDMENT TO THE FY '77 FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT. THE MODALITIES OF IT, I FEEL SURE, REMAIN TO BE DETERMINED.

--BUT THE POINT IS, IT IS A HUMANITARIAN COMMITMENT, IN PRINCIPLE, TO COME FORWARD WITH ANOTHER \$20 MILLION IN RELIEF AND REHABILITATION AID. HOW THAT WOULD BE ADMINISTERED IS ANOTHER MATTER.

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Q. THAT WILL HAVE TO DEPEND ON EVENTS AT THE TIME.

A. SURE. I WOULD AGAIN REFER YOU TO ME HABIB'S TESTIMONY THAT HAS FURTHER INFORMATION ON THAT.

Q. THERE WAS A PROPOSAL IN CONGRESS NOW, OR IN THE SENATE, FOR A HOSPITAL SHIP, A U.S. GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL SHIP, TO BE STATIONED IN LEBANESE WATERS TO HELD THE SICK AND WOUNDED. AND YOU MADE A COMMENT ABOUT THIS YESTERDAY. I WAS WONDERING WHETHER OR NOT OUR EMBASSY IS ALREADY TALKING WITH PEOPLE IN LEBANON AS TO HOW THIS WOULD WORK.

A. I DO NOT KNOW, REALLY. I THINK THAT IS STILL IN A VERY PRELIMINARY STAGE OF EXAMINATION.

Q. FRED, SAKHAROV, OVER THE WEEKEND, ISSUED AN APPEAL TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND THE 15 MEMBERS OF THE U.N., TO THE HEADS OF THESE GOVERNMENTS TO USE THEIR AUTHORITY TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN TAL ZAATAR. DO YOU HAVE ANY REACTION? DOES THE U.S. PLAN TO DO ANYTHING SPECIFICALLY ON THE APPEAL?

A. I HAVE NO REACTION AT ALL TO THE SAKHAROV STATEMENT.

ROBINSON

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